

Drange Apiary, Inc

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Mr. Chairman Brown and members of the Senate Agricultural Committee:

My name is Spencer Drange and I am 15 years old and a freshman at Laurel High School. I am a second generation beekeeper in Montana. My family runs Drange Apiary, Inc, a commercial beekeeping operation, in Laurel. We run 3,000 to 3,500 hives on over 100 locations around Big Timber and from Billings to Hyshem. Our business employs 5 full time employees and part time seasonal employees as needed. My Dad started our business after being a hobbyist beekeeper for many years.

I am here to oppose bill SB-216. Bill SB-216 tries to sidestep the current law MCA 80-6-113. The way it is written creates a loop hole that can be dangerous to our industry. Currently a landowner registration has to be run by the landowner. This revised bill will allow a person registered as a non-hobbyist to run the yard. This kind of yard should fall under the pollination laws MCA 80-6-112. The way the revised law is different is it can be run all year instead of just during pollination time and not just by the landowner.

I also believe that this revision needs to have some more clarification. The word crop is vague. Is a crop a single plant on an acre that needs bees for pollination or an orchard of cherry trees? This revision also lets any registered beekeeper, except a hobbyist, come manage the bees. A beekeeper that wants more yards can talk a landowner into registering a landowner yard and have them manage it just so they can have a place to run more hives. This revised law endangers the 3 mile law that is already in place. The three mile law helps eliminated disease passing from beekeeping operation to beekeeping operation.

The Apiary laws were revised 4 years ago in collaboration between the Montana State Beekeepers Association and the Montana Department of Agriculture and any anyone else who wanted to add their input. These bills were written to help our industry and help keep disease under control in our state.

So in conclusion I would like remind you why I'm opposed to senate bill SB-216. I believe the law is too vague and side steps the 3 mile law that helps control disease in our industry.

Thank You, Chairman Brown and the Agricultural Committee, for allowing me to express my opposition to Bill SB-216.

Spencer Drange